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BRITISH CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING TEXAS

XVI

EDITED BY EPHRAIM DOUGLASS ADAMS

KENNEDY TO BIDWELL<sup>1</sup>

No. 19.

Her Majesty's Consulate  
Galveston  
July 29th. 1844.

Sir,

In accordance with the Instructions issued to Her Majesty's Consuls, I have to report the appearance of a disease at Galveston which Medical Authority has pronounced to be Yellow Fever.

There are as yet no Quarantine Regulations at this Port, and there is every reason to believe that the disease was introduced by the United States War Steamer "Poinsett," when she touched here last month, on her voyage from Vera Cruz homewards.

There are three British Merchant Vessels in Port, which have been visited by the Fever. The Master of one and the Carpenter of another have died, but all the Sick on board these ships, or belonging to them, now—I am happy to say—appear to be in a fair way of recovery.—It is the "Victoria" of Poole, (from Liverpool) that has lost the Master, who exposed himself—most imprudently—to the Sun in an open boat.

William Kennedy.

John Bidwell Esqr.

ELLIOT TO ABERDEEN<sup>2</sup>

*Separate.*

Washington  
August 13th 1844.

My Lord,

I would beg to mention to Your Lordship that I have taken the opportunity of my stay in this part of the Country to pay my respects to Mr. Pakenham, and to renew to him the expression of my readiness to set out for my post at any moment that my presence there may be considered desirable.

<sup>1</sup>F. O., Texas, Vol. 10.

<sup>2</sup>F. O., Texas, Vol. 9.

If however there should be no need for my immediate return, I will request Your Lordship to sanction my continued absence till the beginning of the Month of November.

Charles Elliot.

To The Right Honorable, The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T.

KENNEDY TO ABERDEEN<sup>3</sup>

*Private.*

Her Majesty's Consulate.  
Galveston August 14th. 1844.

My Lord,

General Howard, the new American Chargé d'Affaires, has reached the seat of Government, and presented his credentials. It was his intention, when he left Galveston, to remain at Washington on the Brazos, for the transaction of business. It is said that he is directed to apply for an extension of the time for the completion of the arrangements incidental to the Treaty of Annexation. The additional term, mentioned is three Months. In return (it may be supposed) for this Concession, he has, it is alleged, repeated to President Houston the assurance that the land and naval forces of the United States will be ready to assist Texas, in the event of a Mexican invasion.

I have had letters from British Traders in Western Texas, expressing strong apprehensions of the early outbreak of hostilities between Mexico and Texas.—Some have applied for passports, to protect themselves and their property. There is hardly a symptom of preparation here to repel an invasion, should the threats of Mexico assume a practical form. There has been no further inroad at Corpus Christi. The farmers are quietly watching the progress of their Crops which promise to be most abundant.

A Mexican invasion will greatly facilitate the designs of the United States, and will go a good way towards placing the settlement of the affairs of this Country beyond the reach of diplomacy. Now that the Yellow Fever is among us, people cease to anticipate the return of the Ministers of England and France until winter.—The United States will, as heretofore, have the field to themselves, but I shall use my best endeavours to keep Your Lordship apprized of the course of events.—Mr. Pakenham is desirous

<sup>3</sup>F. O., Texas, Vol. 10.

of information, and to him, also, I shall continue to communicate every fact worth noting that comes to my knowledge.

Captain Galan, the Mexican bearer of despatches, mentioned in my "private" letter to Your Lordship of July 29th has returned home, The Collector of Customs at Galveston gives President Houston's authority for the Statement that he (the President) has received, by Galan, a private letter from General Santa Ana, inviting the reopening of Negotiations for peace.—Whether or not this Statement has been put forward to influence the approaching elections, I am unable to say. That it should be promulgated with that object is probable enough.—Political *finesse* is as well understood and as unscrupulously practised in this unfledged Republic, as in the hoary despotisms of remotest Asia.

William Kennedy.

The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T.

P. S. August 16th.

According to recent arrivals from Corpus Christi, there is no appearance of an invading force on the Rio Grande.

W. K.

KENNEDY TO ABERDEEN<sup>4</sup>

*Private.*

Her Majesty's Consulate  
Galveston, August 24th 1844.

My Lord,

In a communication marked "Private" and dated 29th Ultimo, I had the honor to inform Your Lordship of the arrival of General Howard, Chargé d'Affaires from the United States to Texas, and of his departure, on that day, for the Seat of Government, where he arrived on the 3d Instant.

On the 13th Instant, General Howard was attacked by fever, and on the 16th he died,—the fourth representative of the United States that has died in Texas, out of five that have been appointed since the recognition of it's independence by the American government.

The deceased gentleman was in the prime of vigorous life, and his appointment appeared to have given great satisfaction to the Texan Government—as he had been long on terms of friendly

<sup>4</sup>F. O., Texas, Vol. 10.

communication with President Houston, and, as I am told, with General Andrew Jackson.

The acting Consul of the United States at Galveston has employed a small Coasting Vessel to convey to New Orleans the melancholy intelligence of General Howard's death, and I avail myself of the opportunity to transmit this letter, which is accompanied by one of greater detail to Mr Pakenham.

The Yellow Fever has carried off a tenth part of the population of Galveston, and local experience leads to the expectation that there will be a continuance of sickness until November.

William Kennedy.

The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T.

KENNEDY TO ABERDEEN<sup>5</sup>

No. 21.

Her Majesty's Consulate  
Galveston. September 9th. 1844.

My Lord,

When I entered upon the duties of my office, I had in contemplation to include in my reports to Her Majesty's Government occasional Notices of the emigration to this Country, with especial reference to that portion of it, which might emanate from the United Kingdom. Of Europeans, however, the whole Number introduced into Texas since the beginning of the Year 1843 (owing probably to the unadjusted relations between Mexico and this Republic) has not been so considerable as to afford much Material for suggestion, or remark. It has, at the same time, been large enough to show that persons intending to voyage hither across the Atlantic require to be furnished with some preparatory Counsel.

In years preceding 1843, several vessels fitted up for and conveying British Emigrants arrived at Galveston, but, from the commencement of that year to the present time, no ship containing a dozen of British families has entered this Port. Nearly all the European emigrants within the latter period—which may amount to between six and seven hundred—have been supplied by France and Germany.

Among the European Settlers, the Germans have the reputation of being the most successful. They are generally laborious, per-

<sup>5</sup>F. O., Texas, Vol. 10.

severing and eager to accumulate—orderly for the most part—and they keep well together. They have formed thriving Communities at different points of the interior, and they constitute a considerable proportion of the trading and working population of the towns adjacent to the Coast. In common with the French, they become Market-gardeners. And they divide with the Irish the profits of drayage and cartage, which are pretty large during the business season.

The Irish settlers in Galveston are, with few exceptions, Catholics, and have the benefit of an excellent superintendent and adviser in the Bishop of that faith, M. Odin.—They conduct themselves quietly as a class, and seem healthy, contented and well-doing. Those who are married and residents of two or three years' standing, usually have an independent house and lot—their own horse and dray, and frequently one or more Cows. The wives of the poorer sort assist in washing and housework.

Of the European immigrants, the French evince the least aptitude for the situation in which they are placed. They require to be moved in Companies, and led, directed and superintended, until they feel at home upon the soil.—A Frenchman left to himself in an insulated Settlement, will soon become barbarized.

It is greatly to be wished that all the Europeans who may emigrate to Texas should be instructed, previously to taking the final step, respecting the arrangements proper to be made,—the provision necessary to smooth their way to success—the nature and extent of unavoidable inconveniences, hardships or privations—the amount of present sacrifice and prospective advantage—the road to be pursued and the snares to be avoided. For lack of honest guidance and correct information, persons laudably desirous of improving their condition have been thrown upon these Shores only to encounter disappointment and despondency—to learn, all too late, from sad experience, how little the sufferings of their fellows deter men from practising upon ignorance and credulity for the sake of gain.

I have noted the following causes of disappointment and distress among the European immigrants:

1. Purchase of Spurious land titles from unprincipled adventurers.

2. Emigration at an advanced age and with debilitated Constitutions.

3. Arrival here at an improper season of the Year.

4. Selection of Settlement in unhealthy Situations, and exposure to the Sun.

5. Want of capital.

It is most extraordinary that people can be so foolish as to purchase titles to land in a Country they never saw, from individuals of whom they know nothing, and for whose good faith, they have no satisfactory guarantee. Such has been the case, however, and British Settlers have repeatedly complained of having been cheated by vendors of Texas land titles in England, which titles they found to be utterly worthless when they came to enter upon possession. On this point it may be generally laid down that insulated families ought to abstain from the purchase of lands until they arrive in Texas. Under no circumstance, should a foreign holder of land titles be treated with, unless he be prepared to shew, by unquestionable British references, that his titles are genuine, and that he is deserving of trust. Even when Emigrants reach this Country it is requisite that they should proceed with caution and circumspection. They ought to husband their means, and after carefully examining in what section of the Republic they are most likely to find the soil best suited to European farming, united to the advantages of a Market for produce and the retention of health, they ought to journey thither, and, after due deliberation, choose their ground, having a vigilant eye to the validity of the title, lest, at the very outset, they fall into the abyss of litigation. The vast extent of unoccupied land precludes the necessity of a precipitate choice.—Immigrants, if they think proper, may remain a year without fixing upon a permanent settlement, as now, and for some time to come, the use of tillage and pasture land may be had, rent free, for that or a still longer period.

It is needless to expatiate on the unfitness of the old and the feeble for distant Colonization. Without adverting to other considerations, the climate of the South, however, genial and salubrious in certain localities, must, from it's very novelty, be more or less trying to weakness and age. The habits of previous life ought, besides, to sit lightly on the immigrant, to enable him to adapt himself to a sphere of action entirely new—demanding al-

tered modes of labour, variations in food and clothing, and precautions for the preservation of health, which are too apt to be regarded by the inexperienced as unnecessary restraints.

Allowing the amplest latitude consistent with prudence, the season of Shipment from Europe, for parties intending to cultivate land in Texas, lies between the first of August and the first of February. Persons who look forward to constructing dwellings and putting in a seasonable Crop, ough[t] not, in justice to themselves, or to the Country, to arrive here later than November.—The earlier they are on the spot, in that Month the better. From the first of November to the first of June, there is no danger, with ordinary care, of suffering from local diseases, while the “colds,” so productive of indisposition during the English winter, are unknown. The interval between November and Summer is calculated to strengthen the fortitude of the stranger, to prepare him for the Season of continuous heat,—to initiate him in the Maxims and usages of the older residents and to make him practically acquainted with the most approved plants of house-keeping and husbandry. The immigrant who lands at Galveston between the first of June and the first of October, perils his health and wastes his resources. The Brig “Weser” from Bremen, entered this port on the 4th of last July, having Ninety-six emigrants on board. The Yellow Fever, introduced from Vera Cruz by the United States’ War Steamer “Poinsett,” had attacked the inhabitants of the town.—Huddled up wherever they could procure lodging, and destitute of suitable attendance, which local charity was unable to provide, a large proportion of the newly-arrived emigrants died of the disease—an expenditure of human life wholly gratuitous—the result of ignorance and misdirection.

The selection of a healthy Situation for Settlement is a point of primary importance, inattention to which has been followed by calamitous consequences.

Immigrants shrewd enough in worldly Matters, but unacquainted with a Southern soil and climate, and the incidents of Settlement, so well known on this side of the Atlantic, are apt to be tempted by the opportunity of buying, for a comparatively trifling amount of Money, lands lying on, or near, the borders of a Navigable river. Now, these lands may be really cheap,—even in this land-abounding Country—their fertility may not have



been exaggerated, their pasturage may be unlimited, the wood un-failing—they may offer a most desirable investment for the planter of sugar and cotton—but, to the unacclimated European, their occupation is always perilous and often fatal. Swollen by the Autumn and Winter rains, they overflow their banks—a large expanse of the exuberant alluvion becomes the bed of their redundant waters, which receive constant accessions of rank and decaying vegetation—exhalations arise from the Marshy surface—“intermittents,” by repeated assaults, wear down the frame, or the rapid march of Congestive fever subdues the powers of life.—These are the dangers—not all unknown in the Northern divisions of this Continent—which beset the European who piles his log-house on the Margin of a forest-girdled and periodically overflowing river of the South. Many a foreign settler, in the United States, as well as in Texas, in choosing such an abiding-place, has doomed himself to an early grave.

Caution is too often given in vain to persons unacquainted with the effects of careless exposure to the Summer Sun. It is a frequent cause of sickness, for which, as for disease induced by intemperance, the sufferer has himself to blame.

Cultivation, drainage, and the clearing of the woods, will doubtless operate favourably on the districts unfriendly to the European Constitution, but this is of no moment to the immigrant, who, leaving these lands to the cultivators of tropical products, can find others far better suited to his native husbandry, in Sections of the Republic of proved salubrity.—With the exception of Galveston Island, and the more open and elevated tracts bordering the Bay of the same name, Europeans, as a general rule, ought not to settle, within one hundred and fifty Miles of the Coast, from the river Sabine to the river Colorado. But, in no part of the Country lying between those two rivers (although not a few of them are already resident there) would I recommend my Countrymen to establish themselves as agriculturists. The West is free from debilitating influences, and they should move Westward as far as a prudent regard to safety from frontier troubles and annoyances will justify. From the river Colorado to the Nueces, the insalubrity of the Coast rapidly decreases, until it disappears altogether at Corpus Christi. The Irish Colony, planted on the

Nueces in 1832, was both healthy and prosperous until broken up by the revolutionary War.

Wherever the British immigrants may resolve to abide, they ought to bear in mind that the sword they turn up has not been cultivated before, that the sun in Texas shines with Southern fervour, and that, if they are protected from the effects of their combined influence, they have little to apprehend on the score of health. Every climate has some draw back—the North has its pulmonary complaints and the South its bilious fevers.

Notwithstanding the low price of land, the farmer requires capital, and he will have much to struggle against unless he has sufficient to enable him to fence, stock and crop his land, and to maintain himself until the soil renders its first return—If frugal and industrious, and seconded by what Americans might call an “available” family, he may venture to start upon two hundred pounds, but double that amount would not be too much for preparatory outlay and incidental wants. A great saving is effected, and an inspiring impulse communicated to the Settler’s endeavours, in consequence of the abundance of open land, fit for tillage, and the free range for stock, which may be enjoyed for years. The expense of clearing the forest is a burden from which the Texas husbandman escapes. By the richness of the thickly-timbered river “bottoms” the *planter* is attracted, and there he lays out this fields for the growth of sugar, and cotton.

Farmers possessing the necessary capital, intelligence and energy are the only *class* to which Texas, as She is, offers the prospect of advantageous settlement. A small annual supply of Mechanics will, for some time, be sufficient for the demand;—the same may be said of Agricultural labourers, unless they [are] attached to farming capitalists. The towns will absorb a limited number of useful domestic servants, at good wages. A mere subsistence can easily be obtained by any person capable of manual labour, and not wholly indisposed to exertion.

In addition to all other considerations, the individual who proposes to emigrate ought not only to examine whether the Country to which he thinks of removing is fitted for him, but whether he is fitted for the Country, and for the condition of a Colonist.—If he is unable to endure what, in older communities, would be deemed privations—if he be wanting in Moral courage—if he

cannot look hopefully to the future, under temporary discouragement—he ought not to enter upon the life of a Settler in the wilderness, however fair and fruitful that wilderness may be.

The sufferings to which emigrants from Continental Europe have been needlessly subjected induces me to observe that it would be a worthy and becoming service if their respective Governments would supply their emigrating people with means of precise and accurate information, protect them from fraudulent speculators, and keep them paternally in view until they had made a lodgment on their adopted soil. Blighted expectation, sickness and bereavement by death are heavy and hard to bear among the friends and associations of home, but their pressure is increased a thousand fold when they are sustained among the unfamiliar faces and unwonted scenes of an alien land.

William Kennedy.

The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T.

#### KENNEDY TO ABERDEEN<sup>6</sup>

*Private.*

Her Majesty's Consulate  
Galveston, September 9th 1844.

My Lord,

I had the honor to address a letter marked "Private" to Your Lordship on the 24th Ultimo, conveying intelligence of the death of General Howard, the United States' Chargé d'Affaires in Texas. —This letter I despatched by a small Coasting-vessel, and am obliged to send the present by a conveyance to New Orleans.

I beg leave to enclose, as published in the Government Journal at Washington,<sup>7</sup> a copy of a Manifesto transmitted by the Mexican General Woll, to President Houston, with a Copy of the President's Reply.

President Houston left the Seat of Government for Eastern Texas, on the 7th Ultimo, and was expected by the 17th to reach Sabine, which is distant some thirty or forty Miles from the encampment of the United States' troops at Fort Jessup.

Public attention is fixed upon the Presidential election, which commenced and terminated on the 2nd Instant. It would appear, by the returns received up to the present date, that the

<sup>6</sup>F. O., Texas, Vol. 10.

<sup>7</sup>*The National Vindicator* (date missing).

election has gone in favour of Mr Anson Jones, the present Secretary of State.

The Court Martial appointed to try Commodore Moore closed on the 23rd Ultimo, but its decision has not yet been made public.

Persons in the employment of the Texan Government, and generally acquainted with its proceedings allege that the United States will continue to protect Texas from Mexican invasion until the 4th of next March, when President Tyler's present tenure of Office will expire. There is but a trifling difference between this alleged term of protection and that I mentioned to Your Lordship, in my "Private" letter of August 14th.

According to the last accounts from the South Western frontier, there is no indication either of inroad, or invasion, on the side of Mexico. The Texan Government seems to be quite confident in its means of repulsion, should it be necessary to call them forth.

I had a letter lately from the Attorney General of this Republic, who, under the impression that the state of my health might call me to England this Autumn, expressed a desire to travel with me, having obtained the President's sanction for his proposed absence. He assigns the following, among other reasons, for wishing to accompany me in the event of my returning home.

"You are well aware of the fact that I have, from the beginning, been most decidedly opposed to the Annexation of Texas to the United States. It is my first object to defeat, if possible, the consummation of this most obnoxious Measure, so decidedly hostile, as I conceive it to be, and fraught with such evil consequences to the ultimate prosperity and high destiny of this Country. From Your official connexion with the Ministry, you can render me important assistance in this Matter, and if I am successful in the accomplishment of this great result, I shall deem it the proudest period of my life"

I have always found Mr Terrell (the Attorney General) consistent in regard to Annexation. In my reply to him, I stated that I did not intend leaving Texas during the present year, but that he might command my services for the exposition of his views.

His health, which is much impaired, is the immediate plea for travel.—He enjoins me to be silent as to his communication, in

this question—saying—“I do not wish any person beyond the Cabinet to know any thing of my going, and more especially of my business.”—He was to be ready for his departure “any time after the 20th of September” (the present Month).—I have heard nothing farther since the transmission of my reply.

William Kennedy.

The Earl of Aberdeen, K. T.